

Basic Detail Report



Figure

Date

ca. 600-800

Primary Maker

Classic Veracruz

Medium

pottery and paint

Description

Smiling clay sculptures from the Central Gulf of Mexico lowlands have become famous for their dynamic and lively expressions. Each piece of this large standing object was made in an individual mold and then attached prior to firing. The Olmec were the first to use molds for figurine construction and the technique was still in use at the time of European contact. This figure has a triangular head with the typical smiling expression. He is naked except for a necklace, wristbands, and earrings. Holes at the top of his head would have allowed for the attachment of additional ornaments. Holding a rattle in one hand, like all

the smiling figures, he seems ready to dance. The function of these lovely figures is debated, and some scholars suggest they represent musicians performing at ritual ceremonies while others have interpreted the facial gesture as the grimace of pain by a sacrificial victim. There may also be connections to monkeys, who were widely viewed as intelligent, playful, and highly sexualized.

Dimensions

Overall: 22 x 13 1/8 x 5 in. (55.9 x 33.3 x 12.7 cm)